

Edu-crafting teacher identities: Posthumanist auto/ethnography through cartomancy

Angela Hostetler

Department Secondary Education, University of Alberta

Abstract

“Teacher identity” is a popular topic for discussion and reflection in teacher education. We ask pre-service teachers to consider cultural and personal images of teachers (as expert, caregiver, authoritarian, and so on) in order to accept or resist these images as they contribute to the construction of their own teacher identity. Discussed in theory and aspirational language, teacher identity appears to behave in a reasonably orderly fashion; however, once the novice teacher is introduced to the dynamic world of teaching, teacher identity can become an absolute mess to untangle. As an approach to research, posthumanism offers us a chance to see this mess as beautiful in its lively, evolving, and relational condition. This posthumanist project takes to heart that in order to understand concepts such as identity differently, we must also look differently. After Taylor (2018), who describes posthumanist research as “allowing oneself to be lured by curiosity, surprise, and wonder” (p. 377), I conduct a diffractive auto/ethnographic study of several teachers to find out what happens if I take seriously the value of play in research, wondering what can be gained, in terms of understandings of teacher identities, through cartomancy as a potential source of knowledge. Semetsky (2011) has introduced the use of tarot reading to education theory as a semiotic system that can be engaged with to transform education and heal the human psyche. In my own work, I have built a practice that takes cues from Semetsky and also departs from her work, in the spirit of research creation (Chapman and Sawchuk 2012), forging its own unique method and artistic path. Conducting interviews with five self-identified teachers through video conferencing, I host a dialogue between myself, the teacher, and the tarot cards; a combination of friendly discussion, formalized interview, and tarot reading take place. This unconventional approach to research allows me to give generous attention to these teachers’ identities by acknowledging their connections to other selves, other humans, and more-than-humans. I am particularly hoping to find an expanded sense of teachers’ self-perception and an increased recognition of a teacher’s multiple, connected, changing, and changeable identities.

Keywords: teacher identity, posthumanism, cartomancy

References:

Chapman O, Sawchuk K. 2012. Research-creation: Intervention, analysis and “family resemblances.” *Canadian Journal of Communication* 37: 5-26. **Semetsky** IR. 2011. Re-symbolization of the self: Human development and tarot hermeneutic. **Rotterdam** (NL): Sense Publishers. **Taylor** CA. 2018. Edu-crafting posthumanist adventures in/ for higher education: A speculative musing. *Parallax*, 24(3): 371-381.

Cite as: Hostetler A. 2021. Edu-crafting teacher identities: Posthumanist auto/ethnography through cartomancy. *Alberta Academic Review*, Vol 4 (1): 8, EEGSA-SEGSA Special Issue: Remote Connections, DOI: 10.29173/aar119

